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ABSTRACT

Young people today get mixed moral messages at every turn that erode the souls of young people and of society. To examine the issues involved and to make recommendations on how to end the trend of declining citizenship, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) service-learning initiative, the Compact for Learning and Citizenship created the National Study Group on Citizenship in K-12 Schools. This report focuses on the goal and the implementation of the study group's Every Student a Citizen initiative: to engage all students in active citizenship and help education leaders meet schools' academic and civic missions. The report states that implementation efforts focus on activities and service designed to achieve three goals: (1) articulate the pressing need to revitalize education's civic and citizenship mission; (2) advance service-learning as a strategy that can challenge and guide students to meet their civic responsibilities; and (3) engage every student in activities that make a difference in their schools and communities. The report is divided into the following sections: "Executive Summary"; "Something Is Wrong"; "A Moral Enterprise"; "The Role of Education"; "The Policy Context"; "The Challenge"; "Recommendations"; and "A Final Word." Contains a 34-item bibliography and an appendix which lists programs that effectively use service-learning. (BT)

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Every Student a Citizen: Creating the Democratic Self.
Campaign for Action: Compact for Learning and Citizenship
National Study Group on Citizenship in K-12 Schools.

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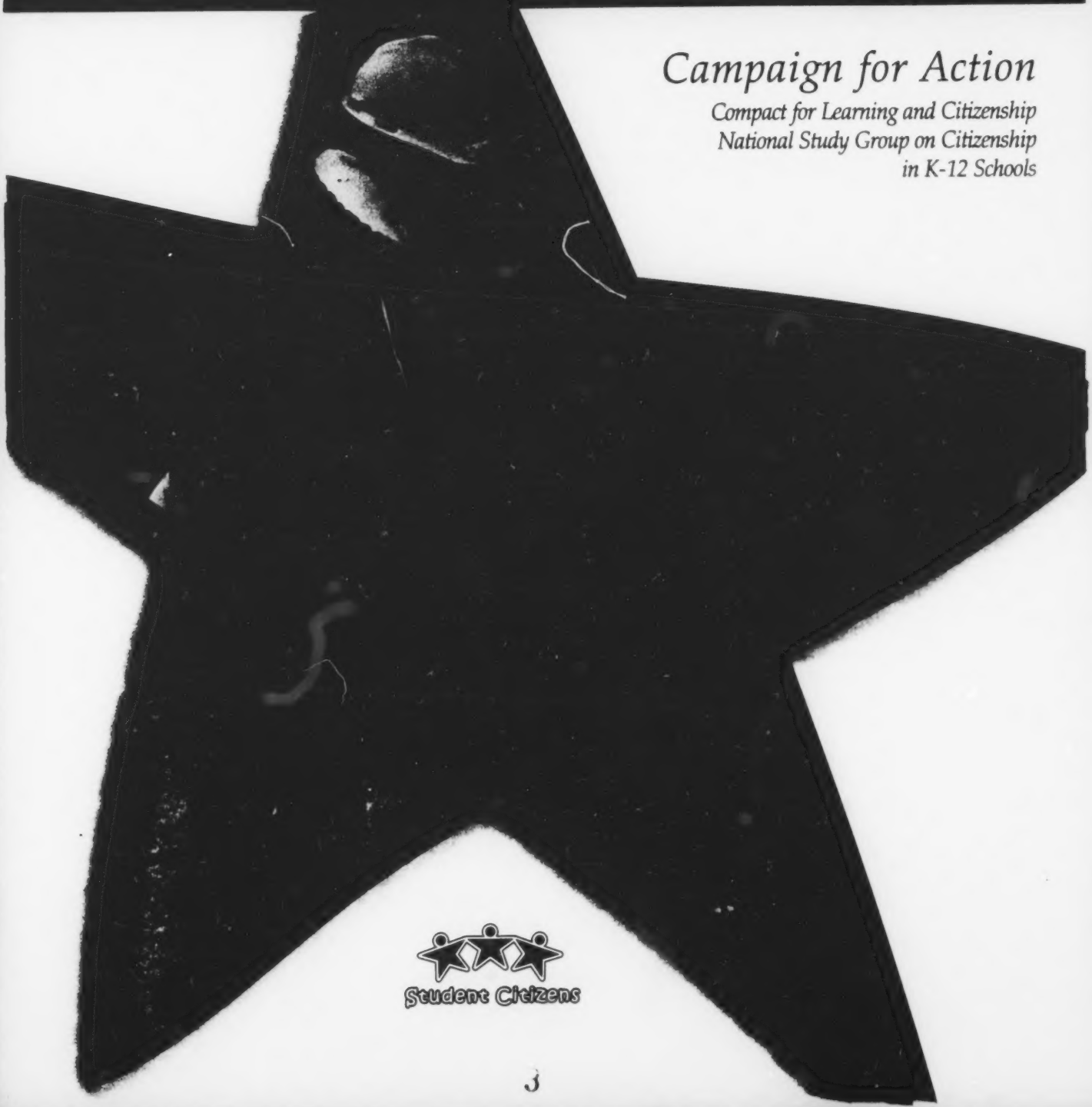
Every Student A Citizen:
Creating the Democratic Self



Campaign for Action

Compact for Learning and Citizenship
National Study Group on Citizenship
in K-12 Schools

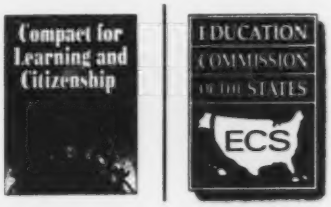
Student Citizens

"I know of no safe depository of the
ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves;
and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise
their control with a wholesome discretion,
the remedy is not to take it from them,
but to inform their discretion."

– Thomas Jefferson

Every Student A Citizen:
Creating the Democratic Self

Compact for Learning and Citizenship
National Study Group on Citizenship in K-12 Schools



Education Commission of the States

Denver, Colorado

July 2000

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"Service is the rent each of us pays for living."

– Marian Wright Edelman

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Student Citizens

ECS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite 50 years of scientific and technological achievement, unabated wealth creation and gains in health, transportation, medicine, manufacturing and a host of other fields, a sense of "dis-ease" gnaws at the collective American soul. Something feels wrong.

A big part of that "something" is a deepening sense of civic disconnection. Many Americans are disengaging from fragmenting social structures that no longer address their real needs. They are repelled by cultural changes such as high divorce rates and explicit sex and gratuitous violence in films. Many feel overlooked and betrayed by governments that seem beyond the reach of ordinary citizens or captive to special interests.

At the same time, more and more Americans seem to be disengaging from even the most fundamental acts of citizenship, such as voting and keeping informed about public issues. These disconnects emerge in sharper, more painful relief among the nation's youth.

Young people today get mixed moral messages at every turn. Adults encourage them to delay personal satisfactions to pursue higher education, a better job or similar lofty aims, yet surround them with the temptations of a consumerist culture that entices them to "Just Do It!" and a media culture that promises instant gratification of frivolous desires – at no personal cost.

These mixed messages are eroding the soul of young people – and of American society. Young Americans and the schools they attend need an invitation to something better and higher. The purpose of school, after all, is not merely to provide the next generation with the tools they need to make a living, but also to help them discover the personal and collective means – the perspectives, strength of character and values – they will need to sustain our civilization. Young people need help in moving toward a higher regard for democratic institutions and a greater willingness to be involved in them.

To examine these issues and make recommendations on how to end this trend of declining citizenship, the Education Commission of the States' (ECS) service-learning initiative, the Compact for Learning and Citizenship, created the National Study Group on Citizenship in K-12 Schools. The 21-member group – including K-12 teachers and students, university faculty and students, representatives from national education associations, administrators of national civic education organizations, and education and service-learning consultants – focused on the goal of ECS' Every Student A Citizen initiative – *to engage all students in active citizenship and help education leaders meet schools' academic and civic missions.*

Implementation efforts for the Every Student A Citizen initiative focus on activities and services designed to achieve three goals:

- Articulate the pressing need to revitalize education's civic and citizenship mission
- Advance service-learning as a strategy that can challenge and guide students to meet their civic responsibilities
- Engage every student in activities that make a difference in their schools and communities.

National Study Group members were convened for a short time to focus on the specific issue of youth disengagement from civic literacy and experience. The group researched the evidence and existing efforts, surveyed potential solutions, answered questions and advanced the conversation, advocating for service-learning and contributing to this final report and call for action.

A secondary group of governors, lieutenant governors, writers, educators, foundation executives, chief state school officers, students and civic experts served as national responders. They read, reacted and responded to an initial draft of this report, the recommendations and call to action, and the components necessary to launch a national campaign to encourage and help young people be good citizens.

This report summarizes the deliberations of these people and their recommendations for moving forward in better educating students for citizenship.

Creating the Democratic Self

Education for citizenship is not the same as civic education, which is concerned with academic skills such as how a bill becomes a law, although it includes acquiring civic skills and knowledge. Rather, education for citizenship is a moral enterprise. It is concerned with organizing schools in ways that give students opportunities to learn about citizenship and its importance, and acquire the needed skills and knowledge associated with it. It is based on the belief that it is just as important for young people to acquire a "democratic self" or a "civic self-understanding" as it is to gain specific civic skills.

The National Study Group sees two components in building this democratic self. First is the ability to recognize and acknowledge one's self-worth and self-interest in collective decisions, that is, to identify one's personal stake in public deliberation and decisionmaking. Students who lack a realistic self-understanding of their education situation cannot, for example, see the connection between a school board decision, what will happen to them in class and what they can do about that decision.

Second, it is important that young people see themselves as members of a public – a community. Without such an understanding, young citizens have no sense of what the common good is or their part in achieving it. They have to learn to recognize that a community is no mere aggregate of individuals, but rather a group of people who belong to one another because they share both a heritage and a hope.

Beyond these elements, being an effective citizen also means acquiring an education in civic skills that nourishes the ability and willingness to make judgments about what is best for the whole. These judgments are rooted in such principles as fairness, beneficence, self-denial, liberty, loyalty, honesty and a commitment to the greater good. A strong capacity for critical judgment and reflection, the ability to conduct critical inquiries about facts and decisions, and the ability to participate in public deliberations impartially and objectively are all significant and necessary civic skills.

In addition, the process of creating new citizens involves the ability to be inclusive, respecting the heritages, diversity and interests of others; to be comprehensive, seeking to understand others' views; to be deliberative, willing to engage in mutual give and take without rancor; and to be cooperative, continuing to participate when things do not go their way.

Acquiring such civic skills is not a matter of teaching techniques or routines, or of creating an education "program" that will deliver civic knowledge and skills as one would teach a chemistry student the procedures for conducting an experiment safely. Participating responsibly and effectively in community life is more like a "craft," an art form that uses people's needs, rights and responsibilities as basic materials to create a common world. In such an understanding, the citizen (regardless of age) becomes a co-creator of his or her own environment. The institutions and processes among which he or she lives can be re-envisioned as realities to be fashioned, rather than as givens to be accommodated. This way of looking at the results of education for citizenship leads to ownership – a stake. It is learned through practice, not out of a book.

Investing in Students Through Service-Learning

The National Study Group is convinced that a curriculum that uses service-learning[1] as an integrating force, combining needed service to the community with strong academic content and structured exercises of reflection in the classroom, can provide this education for citizenship that youth need to become civically engaged in their communities. Schools are charged with serving the universal function of teaching *all* young people the knowledge, skills and attitudes that nourish all forms of civic engagement.

Too many schools, however, are caught up in the "reform mill," busily working to improve but forgetting that education is not about academics alone. As public policy in general has moved toward deregulation, leaner bureaucracies, and the privatization of social services and education, important considerations have been left out of the education reform discussion: the social and civic aims of education, and a concern for social justice, caring, inclusiveness and participation. Education for citizenship – through service-learning – is a serious approach to bridging this gap.

Observation and evaluation of schools that are civically engaged and work to instill principles of citizenship in their students show that the most successful are guided by what might be called "principles of best practice." A democratically engaged school:

- Is guided by an understanding of how democracy and community engagement relate to its mission
- Involves its stakeholders (teachers, administrators, staff, parents, students and community members) in a continuous and authentic way
- Holds learning at its center, including building strong partnerships with communities to develop democratic values, knowledge, skills, efficacy and commitment among its students
- Has a pervasive commitment to democracy
- Develops an infrastructure that supports the complex nature of democratic and community engagement
- Is a "full-use" institution, serving a variety of community needs
- Is flexible, responsive and sensitive to its external constituencies and promotes a culture of democracy.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS

To begin to remedy the potentially dangerous lack of citizenship knowledge, skills and attitude among young people, the National Study Group recommends action at the local, state and national levels. It also recommends steps ECS should take and encourages schools, districts, states, students, parents and communities to find their own responses and avenues of action, to explore other ways to become involved in this critical call for civic action.

The recommendations that follow are ones policymakers, classroom teachers, school administrators, communities, parents and students can begin to act on today. They entail little mystery, are inexpensive to implement (most, in fact, are free) and highly leveraged. For the most part, since they reflect long-established beliefs, they scarcely require a change of heart. What they do require is a generous dose of political will and the leadership to create changes.

[1] *Service-learning, as defined by the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, helps students or participants learn and develop by participating in thoughtfully organized service that is conducted in and meets the needs of a community, is coordinated with an elementary or secondary school, institution of higher education or community service program, and with the community, helps to foster civic responsibility, is integrated into and enhances students' academic curriculum or the education components of the community service program in which participants are enrolled, provides structured time for students or other participants to reflect on the service experience.*

For Schools and School Districts, the National Study Group Recommends:

- Reassess the moral and democratic environment to learn what principles are taught deliberately, by inadvertent example or in the "hidden curriculum" of structures, procedures, decisionmaking, attitudes and behaviors.
- Align policies and their implementation with a coherent moral structure valued by all personnel.
- Implement programs of community outreach to involve community groups in creating democratic learning environments in all schools, giving careful consideration to restructuring measures that make it possible for students to participate in decisionmaking activities and governance.
- Institute regular school visits and presentations by locally elected and appointed officials and state legislators to provide a venue for discussing local political issues, especially those related to education.
- With the assistance of national, local and regional teacher-training institutions, design and offer a full complement of professional development courses that integrate all aspects of civic knowledge, skills and attitudes throughout the curriculum. These offerings should be predicated on a service-learning model and other experiential activities, using the local community as a classroom.
- Include, to the extent practicable, PTA and PTO members as students in these courses along with teachers to strengthen parents' status as their children's role models for civic involvement and commitment.
- Create on local school boards at least two student positions with full expression and participation in all decisionmaking activities and governance.
- Include in social studies, civics and government courses, stories and lessons that teach the traditions of how ordinary citizens have created real and lasting social change.
- Reconstitute PTAs and PTOs as Parent, Teacher, Student Associations/Organizations, according student members the same rights and responsibilities as adult members.
- Provide students opportunities to work individually or in groups on service-learning activities in their schools or community.
- Work with governments, regulatory bodies and authorities, and officials to create internship positions designed as service-learning opportunities for youth.

For States, the National Study Group Recommends:

- *Governors:* Provide forums to educate state legislators, members of state school boards, state chapters of professional education associations, state teacher organizations and unions, school principals and district superintendents about the importance of including civic education in the core K-12 curriculum. Focus these efforts on experiential learning, especially service-learning, as the gateway to education for citizenship.
- *State school boards.* Create at least two student positions with full student expression and participation in all decisionmaking activities and governance.
- *Legislators:*
  - — Regularly visit local schools to explain roles and responsibilities
  - — Establish student internship positions in legislative offices
  - — Fund K-12 efforts that incorporate multi-dimensional curricula aimed at fostering civic responsibility, the development of civic skills and civic education, including funds for professional development of teachers and community outreach.

For the National Level, the National Study Group Recommends:

- *U.S. Department of Education*: Through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, promote and support civic education programs that engage students in service-learning activities.
- *National Goals Panel, Corporation for National Service and U.S. Department of Education*: Work together to assess the country's progress in the citizenship part of Goal 3 of Goals 2000: Student Achievement and Citizenship.
- *National Alliance for Civic Education*: Establish a national dialogue among organizations working on these issues, focused on how to engage young people in political action.
- *Corporation for National Service*: Rewrite guidelines to require that all Learn and Serve America programs for students K-12 and higher focus on fostering civic responsibility, the development of civic dispositions, and the knowledge and participatory skills of responsible citizenship.

For ECS:

To begin to carry out these recommendations, the National Study Group recommends that ECS, through the Compact for Learning and Citizenship, take the lead in helping state and local policymakers – governors, legislators, chiefs and superintendents – do the following:

- Assess the state of citizenship education in their schools
- Develop policies and plans for improving creation of the "democratic self" among their students
- Become part of the national campaign to implement the National Study Group's recommendations.

The Study Group and ECS believe furthering these efforts will require a three- to five-year period. Activities suggested for ECS include the following:

- *Dissemination and Communications*

  Disseminate the *Every Student A Citizen* report to national, state and local audiences, such as policymakers, education officials, discipline-based organizations and parent groups, through a variety of means, including Web sites, meetings and work with the media. ECS believes it is critical for this report to be broadly disseminated, followed by targeted communication with various audiences.

- *Networking*

  Develop partnerships with various national organizations and coalitions to promote implementation of the recommendations among their members.

- *Demonstration Project*

  Design a strategy that engages a targeted number of states, districts and schools in infusing and scaling-up education for citizenship. The focus would be on such elements as professional development, policy support, partnerships, sharing of promising practices, and creating products that identify challenges and successful strategies.

- *Research and Policy Review*

  Conduct an environmental scan of the existing research on civic and citizenship education to determine who's doing what on this issue and how it is being framed and covered by the media and other organizations.

CONCLUSION

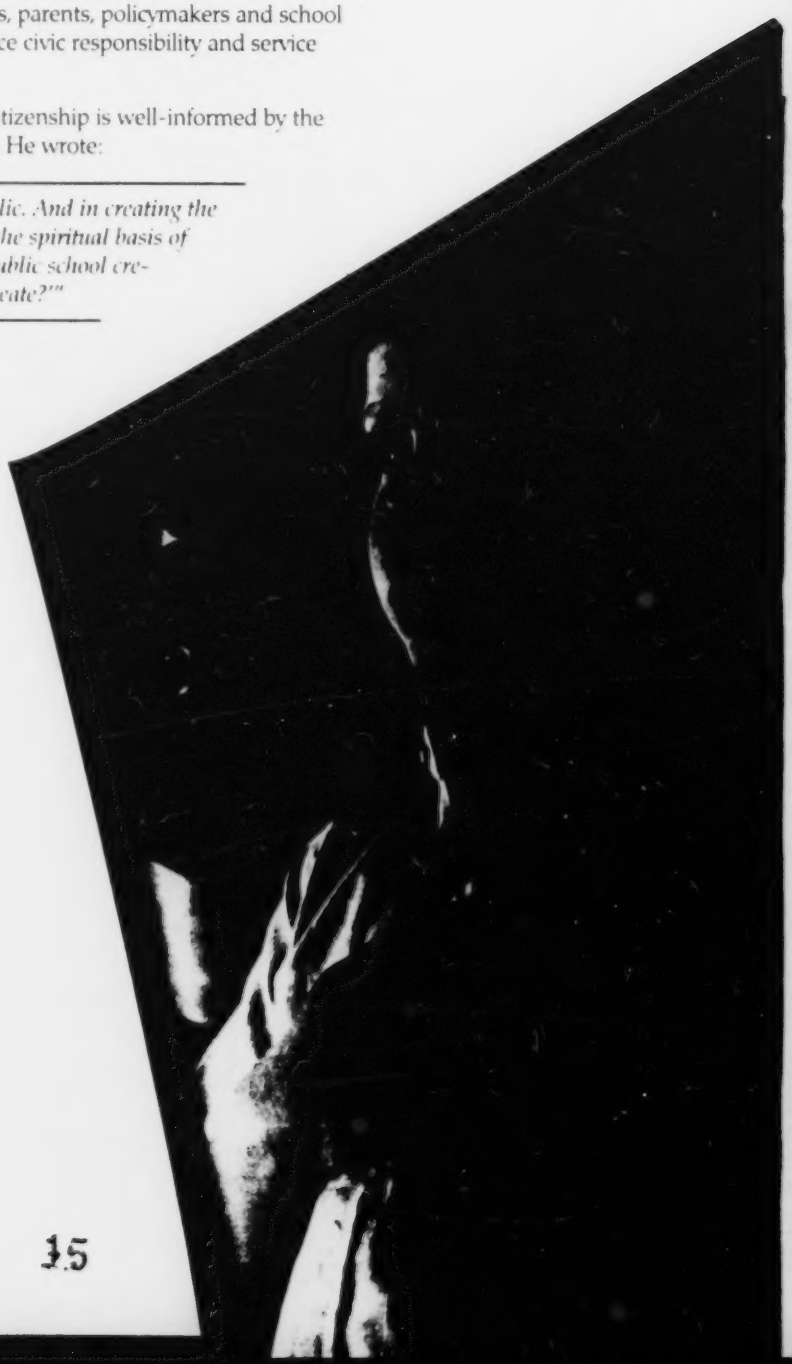
The turn of the century and the millennium marked more than an event on the calendar. Many Americans sense the nation is at a turning point for the experiment in democracy. Many citizens feel a historic opportunity is within their grasp – to educate and empower the rising generation to become active and responsible citizens. Schools, policymakers, citizens – everyone – need to work together to ignite the imagination of America's youth, reinvigorate the vision of the Founding Fathers, and adapt it to the incredible social, technological, environmental and economic challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Indeed, this can be done if youth are helped to create a "democratic self" – in their communities, in their schools and in their own lives. To that end, teachers, parents, policymakers and school administrators, together with students, must resolve to place civic responsibility and service itself at the core of learning.

This pursuit of the democratic self through education for citizenship is well-informed by the observation of writer Neil Postman in *The End of Education*. He wrote:

"...public education does not serve a public. It creates a public. And in creating the right kind of public, the schools contribute to strengthening the spiritual basis of the American creed....The question is not 'Does or doesn't public school create a public?' The question is, 'What kind of public does it create?'"

If we do nothing to improve how students are educated for citizenship, we give up the ability to set the terms for the future of our children and, in the end, the nation. The opposite of doing nothing about citizenship education is not stasis. It is to concede that the disconnect Americans now experience as a problem inevitably will be a permanent condition. The decision to default is one the nation cannot afford.



SOMETHING IS WRONG

Despite half a century of spectacular scientific and technological achievement, unabated wealth creation and impressive gains in health, transportation, medicine, manufacturing and a host of other fields, a vague sense of "dis-ease" continues to gnaw at the collective American soul. Something seems wrong.

A big part of that "something" stems from a deepening sense of civic disconnection. Many Americans are "bowling alone," as Robert D. Putnam, director of Harvard University's Center for International Affairs, noted in the title of his recent study documenting the norms of civic engagement. They are disengaging from fragmenting social structures that no longer address their real needs. They are repelled by cultural energies such as high divorce rates and the explicit sex and gratuitous violence in films. Many feel overlooked and often betrayed by governments – federal, state and local – that seem beyond the reach of ordinary citizens or captive to special interests.

Part of the disconnect is the institutional schizophrenia that seems to compel many Americans to want to privatize public enterprises such as schools, while simultaneously bringing traditionally private concerns such as medical care under the public tent. All the while, more and more Americans seem to be disengaging from even the most fundamental acts of citizenship – voting or staying informed on public issues. In withdrawal, they become alienated, angry or apathetic. To paraphrase the African writer Chinua Achebe, the curse of America entering a new millennium is that the knife has been put to the cords that once bound Americans together, and society is unraveling.

The Effect on Young People

The disconnects that adult Americans sense among themselves emerge in sharper, more painful relief when they look at their children. Many young people feel beset by a discrepant cacophony that deafens them with mixed moral messages at every turn. The adults in their lives encourage them to delay personal satisfactions to pursue higher education, a better job or similarly lofty aims, yet surround them with the temptations of a consumerist culture that entices them to "Just Do It!" and a media culture that promises instant gratification of frivolous desires – at no personal cost.

Some individuals advocate private compassion while exhibiting public indifference to the hungry and homeless. Elected officials tout rehabilitation for criminals, yet America sustains high rates of imprisonment and recidivism. The examples are legion; their consequence is a rising cynicism among the young regarding the political, cultural and social infrastructures of American life.

Afloat in this sea of contradiction and cynicism, young Americans and the schools they attend need an invitation to something better and higher. Those adults who set the terms for the world in which they live need to invite youth to the rewards of citizenship and the adventure of growing into their civic selves. As ECS noted in 1997 when it created the Compact for Learning and Citizenship:

"The purpose of school, after all, is not merely to provide the next generation with the tools they need to make a living, but also to help youth discover the personal and collective means – the perspectives, strength of character and values – they will need to sustain our civilization. Young people need help in moving toward a higher regard for democratic institutions and a greater willingness to be involved in them."

The National Study Group

To examine these issues and make recommendations on how to end this trend of declining citizenship, the Education Commission of the States' (ECS) service-learning initiative, the Compact for Learning and Citizenship, in 1999 created the National Study Group on Citizenship in K-12 Schools. The 21-member group – including K-12 teachers and students, university faculty and students, representatives from national education associations, administrators of national civic education organizations, and education and service-learning consultants – was asked to focus on the desired outcome of ECS' Every Student A Citizen initiative – *to engage all students in active citizenship and help education leaders meet schools' academic and civic missions.*

The initiative has three goals:

(1) To articulate the pressing need to revitalize the civic mission of education

(2) To advance service-learning as a strategy that can challenge and guide students to meet their civic responsibilities

(3) To engage every student in activities that make a difference in their schools and communities.

National Study Group members were convened for a short time to focus on the specific issue of youth disengagement from civic literacy and experience. The group researched the evidence and existing efforts, surveyed potential solutions, answered questions and advanced the conversation, advocating for service-learning and contributing to this final report and call for action.

A secondary group of governors, lieutenant governors, writers, educators, foundation executives, chief state school officers, students and civic experts served as national responders. They read, reacted and responded to an initial draft of this report, the recommendations and call to action, and the components necessary to launch a national campaign to encourage and help young people learn to be good citizens.

The National Study Group believes that the educational process of service-learning can help young people define what authors Francis Moore Lappé and Paul Martin Du Bois, co-founders of the Center for Living Democracy, term "the democratic self." This self-understanding can provide young people with two key capacities: (1) the ability to recognize their own self-worth and claim their own self-interest in collective decisionmaking at all levels of society, and (2) the ability to see themselves as members of a public with a powerful stake in achieving the common good. Without such an understanding, young citizens will have no sense of what the common good is or of their part in achieving it. They have to learn to recognize that a community – a public – is no mere aggregate of individuals, but a group of people who belong to one another because they share both a heritage and a hope.

A core purpose of this initiative, therefore, is fostering support for service-learning as an effective way to promote these key capabilities. People become good citizens, the National Study Group argues, "by continually walking the civic tightrope between self-interest and the interest of others." As writer and sociologist Neil Postman says, a basic purpose of public education is not to *serve* a public but to *create* one.

A MORAL ENTERPRISE

Building New Citizens

Civic education goes far beyond mastering knowledge about how a government operates or any textbook understanding of a citizen as one who has the birthright to speak his or her mind and a responsibility to vote. Building and strengthening the civil society takes a conscious and continuous effort to build new citizens – that is, educating for citizenship as well as providing civic education. While they are two sides of the same coin, and both are necessary, they are not the same.

Civic education is concerned with academic skills such as how a bill becomes a law. Education for citizenship is a moral enterprise. It is concerned with organizing schools in ways that give students opportunities to learn about citizenship and its importance, and acquire the needed skills and knowledge associated with it. It is based on the belief that it is just as important for young people to acquire a democratic self-understanding as it is to gain specific civic skills.

As part of the process of creating new citizens, education for citizenship offers learning in those perspectives, practices, policies and capabilities that equip young people to live and work in a civil society and to contribute to its growth and betterment. New citizens learn how to find meaning in a society where mutual respect and shared value serve the interests not of a few, but of all.

Being an effective citizen also means acquiring an education in civic skills that nourishes the ability and willingness to make judgments about what is best for the whole. These judgments are rooted in such principles as fairness, beneficence, self-denial, liberty, loyalty, honesty and a commitment to the greater good. A strong capacity for critical judgment and reflection, the ability to conduct critical inquiries about facts and decisions, and the ability to participate in public deliberations impartially and objectively are all significant civic skills.

In addition, the process of creating new citizens involves the ability to be inclusive, respecting the heritages, diversity and interests of others; to be comprehensive, seeking to understand others' views; to be deliberative, willing to engage in mutual give and take without rancor; and to be cooperative, continuing to participate when things do not go their way.

Acquiring citizenship skills is not a matter of teaching techniques or routines or creating an education "program" that will deliver civic knowledge and skills as one would teach a chemistry student the procedures for conducting an experiment safely. Participating responsibly and effectively in the life of the community is more like a "craft," an art form that uses people's needs, rights and responsibilities as basic materials to create a common world. In this situation, the citizen (regardless of age) becomes a co-creator of his or her own environment. The institutions and processes among which he or she lives can be re-envisioned as realities to be fashioned, rather than as givens to be accommodated. Education for citizenship leads to ownership – a stake. It is learned through practice, not out of a book.

Creating the Democratic Self

Once education for citizenship is seen as a way to help individuals gain the understanding and skills they need to support the values of democracy and reinforce its moral structure, the next step is to create the teaching and learning processes that help individual young people create the democratic self. The National Study Group believes the most important of these processes are: (1) service-learning, (2) mastering academic content and (3) group problem solving.

Service-learning has become one of the most fruitful education approaches to education for citizenship because it helps young people acquire a democratic self through deliberate practice. "We become," said Aristotle, "what we repeatedly do." One becomes a just person by practicing the virtue of fairness, a responsible person by taking on and completing tasks, a trustworthy

person by acting with fidelity. Likewise, people become good and well-balanced citizens by continually walking the civic tightrope between self-interest and that of others.

Service-learning supports this learning by a mandatory process of reflection that encourages students to probe for meaning in their experience as well as content. Reflection teaches students to ask: "Why?" "What is different now about your thinking and feelings?" "How have your attitudes and behavior changed as a result?" They do not simply talk about "what happened."

Mastering academic content also is essential for developing the democratic self. Young people cannot be civically literate without being well-versed in the issues of the day. They must know their own views and understand why they have adopted them. Nor can they participate fully in creation of the "common good" without the academic skills that enable them to contribute to society, whether in physical science, human relationships, commerce, information management or the arts. To do this, young people need a developed sense of history, an intimate knowledge of democratic institutions, a working knowledge of government and strong communications skills.

Finally, skills in ***group problem solving*** are essential for achieving civic objectives. When students collaborate on a service project, engage in research, cooperate with other community members and work out the implications of policy issues, they are by definition doing the work of what the ancient Greeks called the *polis*, the whole body of the people. When students in service-learning contexts solve real-world problems, meaningful change becomes a natural, ineluctable outcome of their efforts.

Models of the Democratic Self. Helping students acquire a democratic self can be greatly enhanced with models, both in the traditional classroom and in the context of service-learning. Students who have models in the form of persons and organizations that make significant civic contributions are more likely to acquire the habit of civic action than if they simply are told how they ought to behave.

A cogent example of how this can be done is provided by author and lecturer Paul Loeb, associated scholar with the Center for Ethical Leadership. He writes that:

"Young men and women don't get involved in major public issues primarily because they find it hard to conceive of themselves as political actors. Far too many consign social involvement to the realm of either the crazies or the saints. They find it hard to act because they don't know the history of people who have acted in the past.

Take the example of Rosa Parks. Students, and most Americans, think she started her involvement when she refused to move to the back of the Montgomery bus, almost on a whim. They don't know that before refusing to give up her bus seat, Parks had spent 12 years helping lead the local NAACP chapter…. Her tremendously consequential act might never have taken place without the humble and frustrating work she and others did earlier on. Her initial step of getting involved was just as courageous and critical as the fabled moment when she refused to move to the back of the bus."

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION

Schools as Democratic Institutions

In a March 22, 2000, *Education Week* article, Rosemary C. Salomone, professor of law at St. Johns' University School of Law, reargued another ancient Greek idea – the indissoluble link between education and the shared set of norms and values that binds society together. Such giants of American education as Horace Mann and Thomas Dewey echoed that proposition in their belief that education should develop in students a common faith in a set of shared democratic ideals. In more recent times, Salomone points out, the U.S. Supreme Court has "affirmed that preparation for democratic citizenship is the primary end of state-supported education."

Schools, then, are expected to embody and model the principles of democratic selfhood. Students must have opportunities to practice democratic decisionmaking while they learn. Students, their views and decisions must be valued in the school community if young people themselves are to feel valuable. It is in the school that they can and should learn that their contributions make a difference where it counts – in a place that matters to them.

There is an additional implication that cannot be passed over. If the fundamental connection among a civil society, democracy and civic education is a moral one, then "the school itself must exist as a morally coherent community and a microcosm of democracy, creating a cohesive institutional ethos that persistently reinforces notions of democratic rights and responsibilities at all levels" (Salomone). In the end, the pursuit of the democratic self through citizenship education in the school as a "morally coherent community" is well-described by writer and sociologist Neil Postman, in *The End of Education* (1996). He wrote:

"Public education does not serve a public. It creates a public. And in creating the right kind of public, the schools contribute to strengthening the spiritual basis of the American creed. The question is not 'does or doesn't public school create a public?' The question is, 'What kind of public does it create?'"

The Purpose of Schools

Regrettably, this understanding of what public education is for has become part of the "disconnect," as Americans sense a growing dissatisfaction with a once-dependable institutional constant in their lives.

Although most schools continue to offer civics and government classes that teach young people about the structures and processes of democratic government, too many schools seem to have lost sight of the abiding purpose of their efforts. As the mission of public education has expanded to include everything from individual preparation for college to teaching 16-year-old males how to survive as bachelors, the public mission of schooling increasingly is in conflict with what happens to individual young people.

Troubling questions bubble to the surface. When is individual choice constrained by concern for the common good? When is individual sacrifice appropriate, relative to the needs of society's welfare? What knowledge of the *polis* and what skills for keeping it healthy should schools teach?

Education reforms of the 1980s and 1990s have focused primarily on establishing and meeting academic standards and on making sure young people are well-prepared for higher education or the workplace. But comparatively little attention has been paid to what it means to prepare

young people to participate fully in a democracy – especially in those dimensions that go beyond mere knowledge of government to include the development of skills, attitudes and dispositions needed to sustain and renew traditions of self-governance.

The Need for "Nuts and Bolts." The "nuts and bolts" of citizenship include teaching children how to connect with and mobilize their fellow citizens in organizing and advocating around issues. Among the most civically fruitful roads the democratic self can travel are those that lead to active membership in political parties, local task forces and issue-specific organizations that work to make a difference in society. Young people need to learn how to bring their fellow citizens together around common concerns; how to give a voice to their ideas, support and objections; how to persevere when faced with disagreement or opposition; and how not to lose heart when they lose a battle. "Civic smarts" involve not just knowing what has to be done, but how to get something done.

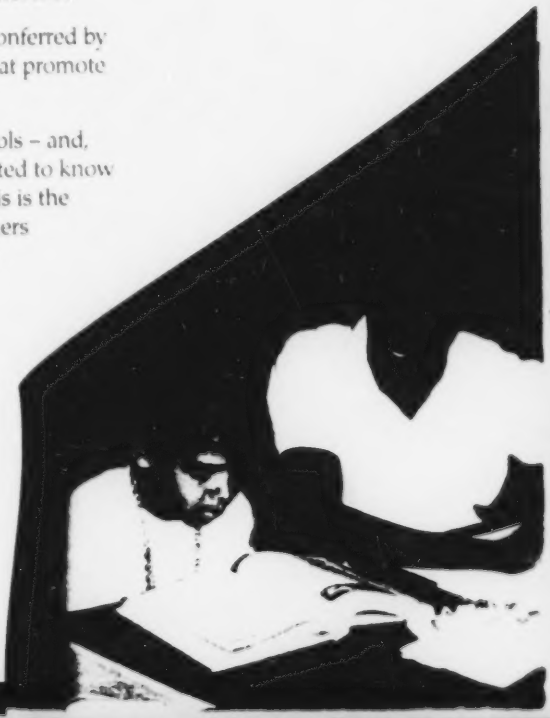
Thus, service-learning projects that involve civic issues, in addition to providing experience-based education, are places where the young can cut their political teeth. The National Study Group believes that disengagement and disconnection from community and democratic processes lie close to the root of serious national problems, and that public schools and reinvigorated civic education are not simply a nice idea but rather necessary to strengthen democracy.

Young people are influenced from a variety of directions, e.g., families, peers and media, about their participation in democratic processes. But given the amount of time young people spend in schools during their formative years (about 14,000 hours in grades K-12), schools and teachers play a significant, often dominant, role in conveying messages about what society expects of each new generation of citizens. Schools are charged with teaching *all* young people the knowledge, skills and attitudes that nourish all forms of civic engagement.

The attitudes and behavior about democratic processes modeled by schools and teachers are as various as they are extensive. Often they conflict. For example:

- Many teachers and schools present "good citizenship" awards only to students who "follow the rules" and do not question authority. Other teachers expect students to be helpful, cooperative, responsible people.
- Some teachers expect students to learn skills and attitudes that promote social change, focusing on advocacy, social criticism and political involvement as education outcomes.
- Many textbooks define citizenship and its attendant rights simply as a status, conferred by birth in a particular country, and are silent about the behaviors and attitudes that promote genuine civic engagement.

These conflicting concepts of citizenship and civic engagement illustrate that schools – and, indeed, society itself – are neither consistent nor clear about what youth are expected to know and be able to do as citizens in their adult lives. (See sidebar on pages 13-14) If this is the case, how can young people be faulted for not being civically engaged when teachers and other adults are unclear about expectations? How can they help adults figure out what they should know?



Incorporate Civics Education Standards

An institutional basis for answering such questions is being shaped as part of the education reform movement, particularly in the development of standards for civics education. Three sets of comprehensive standards, each grounded in a slightly different definition of citizenship, have been developed by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) and the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS).

The NAEP standards relate primarily to "book knowledge" about government; they do not assess civic skills and competencies. Both ASCD and NCSS assess more than book knowledge. Standards relate broadly to intellectual skills (e.g., making judgments or assessing implications), participatory skills (e.g., collecting relevant information and listening to others' views), monitoring (e.g., using media to track issues) and influencing (e.g., learning to recognize one's own interests and the skills of persuading others).

ASCD's *Handbook of Basic Citizenship*, designed for use in schools, provides checklists to help teachers focus their instruction when teaching citizenship competencies. A reflection component connects to student experiences, allowing students to see the meaning in what they do and how they can apply what they have learned to new situations. NCSS' standards apply to core knowledge and ways of thinking about basic academic concepts and information from many academic disciplines.

Involve Parents

Involving parents in citizenship education is critical as well, especially as role models. Some parents support student involvement in the community because such activities reinforce the value systems they themselves espouse and hope to instill in their children. Other parents disagree with the civic attitudes taught (e.g., community responsibility and political participation) or resent what they see as a challenge to their role as their children's primary teachers of values.

Still other parents view the time spent in community-based activities as competing with the "basics" of education and envision a negative effect on their children's chances at higher education, especially if their children are struggling academically.

Such concerns cannot be overlooked. Parents, therefore, should be involved in developing and implementing service-learning activities to understand how experientially based service-learning can strengthen academics. Service-learning's potential for increasing parents' involvement in their children's education also should be explored.

WHAT AN ACTIVE CITIZEN SHOULD KNOW AND BE ABLE TO DO

Civic Knowledge

- Understand the structure and mechanics of constitutional government, political institutions and how they evolved in the history of the United States
- Understand such democratic principles as the rule of law, majority rule, natural rights, and freedom of religion, speech and association
- Recognize characteristics and actions of effective citizens
- Know how ordinary citizens have acted in the past to create change
- Understand the influences of economics, geography and social forces on politics
- Understand and describe local problems and their connection to state and national issues
- Be familiar with current issues, policy questions and potential solutions

Civic Attitudes

- Have these traits: belief in liberty, equality, civil and humanitarian rights, personal responsibility, courage, diligence, fairness, honesty, trustworthiness, personal integrity
- Recognize and respect human diversity, including the views of others
- Develop a sense of effectiveness in the role of community advocate
- Consider the balance between rights and responsibilities

Follow Principles of Best Practice

Repeated observation and evaluation of civically engaged schools show that the most successful are guided by what might be called "principles of best practice." Though few in number, these principles should set the terms for what it means to be a democratically or civically engaged school. A democratically engaged school:

- *Is guided by an understanding of how democracy and community engagement relate to its mission.* A school committed to democratic engagement makes that commitment an explicit part of its mission, and all stakeholders participate in forming consensus around the mission and its democratic orientation. In addition, school leadership must continuously strengthen and advocate the connection between mission and practice.
- *Involves stakeholders (teachers, administrators, staff, parents, students and community members) in a continuous, authentic and meaningful way.* In a study of colleges and universities that had been successful in raising the level of community involvement, Barbara Holland of Portland State University's Academic Affairs/Urban Studies and Planning Department found the involvement of various stakeholders was essential to the change process. The same is true of public schools.
- *Holds learning at its center.* Schools seeking to raise the level of democratic engagement build strong community partnerships to develop democratic values, knowledge, skills, efficacy and commitment among their students. Most important, however, they keep learning at the core of these relationships, something the service-learning model does by helping students build a bridge between service and subject-matter content.
- *Has a pervasive commitment to democracy.* This commitment informs planning, resource allocation, administrative decisions, student and teacher recognition, and evaluation and assessment. It manifests itself in a genuine student voice in school affairs, a respect for student opinion about real school issues and student participation in school decisionmaking structures.
- *Develops an infrastructure that supports the complex nature of democratic and community engagement.* For example, teachers cannot be expected to change the conduct in their classrooms or their pedagogical approaches in isolation. Schools must develop professional infrastructures that support and connect teachers to one another and the community.
- *Is a "full-use" institution, serving a variety of community needs.* Those persons concerned with civic education of the young would do well to revive an understanding of the school from a previous generation – the school as a community center. In earlier times, schools were political club houses, entertainment centers – venues for community meetings and places where a variety of social functions was held. When used this way, schools become mediating institutions for conducting community business, places where community projects are spawned, local disagreements are aired, family and individual needs are met, and decisions affecting the welfare of all are discussed, shaped and considered.

- Foster the value of service and continued involvement in the community
- Believe in shared democratic values and participate in civic and political processes
- Be committed to the common good

Civic Skills

- Communication and persuasion skills
- Problem solving and conflict resolution
- Democratic decisionmaking
- Ability to organize fellow citizens around concerns
- Community service
- Critical inquiry, judgment and reflection
- Ability to acquire information from primary and secondary sources and evaluate it for objectivity, accuracy and point of view
- Ability to balance self-interest with public interest

Adapted from "Fostering Civic Responsibility Through Service-Learning." Constitutional Rights Foundation Service-Learning Network. Spring 2000. Vol. 6, No. 1. With additions from the National Study Group.

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- *Is flexible, responsive and sensitive to its external constituencies and promotes a culture of democracy.* Itself a community of diversity, the school as an institution is open to engaging in a dialogue about real issues, seeks to impart a sense that everyone belongs to and has a stake in the same community, and holds civic participation at the heart of what is expected from its students.

Support Teachers

Teachers constantly are being asked to add more and more to their teaching objectives. But they rarely are given the professional support they need to be effective in discharging these burdens or the time they need to make the changes lasting ones. There are many ways schools can provide high-quality opportunities for students to build their democratic selves. But from a teacher's perspective, no real or enduring reform can occur without targeted support. Key areas for teacher support include the following:

- Providing a more manageable working environment and making sure the demands placed on teachers are realistic
- Creating a setting where both education about democracy and democratic education can and does occur
- Providing professional development opportunities that educate each teacher, in a variety of ways, on civic systems (especially local systems) and current events.

Smaller Schools and Classes. The foregoing is by no means a comprehensive list of what teachers and schools need to enhance citizenship skills in their students. At bottom, the most effective reform may lie in making schools more intimate and teacher-student ratios smaller. The potential benefits of this single step are numerous and far-reaching:

- Teachers with fewer students on their class roster can engage students more effectively simply because they know their students better.
- Fewer students means more time for teachers to spend supporting each student's particular needs, interests and talents.
- Teachers with smaller student loads can personalize their curricula to take advantage of each student's interests and passions.
- Teachers with fewer students can make use of more community-based resources because they have fewer logistical problems, may be able to find community mentors more readily, and can free up time to oversee individual student projects.
- Perhaps most important, smaller classes provide the opportunity for each student's voice to be heard more clearly and more often, providing more opportunity for students to create changes in their own immediate environment.

Create Democratic Schools

Other fundamental changes outside the classroom walls – in school structure and governance, for example – also can be instrumental in modeling democracy in the classroom, school and school system. School, district and community leaders interested in creating a new generation of good citizens must be sure they themselves act in ways that demonstrate what it means to take part in a community in a positive manner.

But demonstrating democracy is not on its own enough. Students themselves need to practice citizenship skills within the relatively controlled environment of the classroom. Here they can learn from challenges and triumphs, responses and failures – all the varied realities of the democratic process.

From seeing and practicing democracy in and outside of school, students acquire more than skills. Such activities have philosophical and moral impacts for them as well. Young people have a keen nose for hypocrisy. The adults they hear lauding the virtue of honesty and caring for others are the same adults they sometimes hear trimming the truth and causing harm to others. Among such young people, "Do as I say and not as I do" rings as true as cracked crystal; they hear and experience the inherent moral disconnect. They need to experience adults acting in beneficial ways.

At the same time, adults need the opportunity to experience young people acting in a positive way. Teachers, not only as a matter of good pedagogy but also of personal integrity, should be the first line of support for their students as they prepare to link values to community action through service. Teachers should work to provide learning environments that enable community members to get to know students well enough to assault the negative stereotypes many grown-ups have about young people.

Hearing the Voices of Youth. All Americans could travel a considerable distance toward getting adults to see students in a more positive way if they stop viewing young people as "objects to be acted upon." All members of the school and larger community should make it a habit to include youth voices in public debate as often as possible. If community dialogue were seen as incomplete without youth representation, worlds of positive change could be accomplished.

Ideas for getting more youth voices into the community include the following:

- Encouraging politicians or other prominent community members to listen to young people regularly as a permanent part of the policy debate
- Providing opportunities for students to be involved in political organizations as interns, guests and full members
- Establishing teen councils and encouraging more communitywide participation in youth-led citizen groups or even creating a "youth seat" with full voting powers on official boards
- Encouraging student attendance at city council meetings.

This list is only a beginning. For these kinds of changes to be relevant beyond the school, teachers and administrators must become even more aware – even expert – in how local and national civic systems operate. As they become more literate and informed themselves, they need to provide pathways for students to increase their awareness, encouraging involvement in real issues as a matter of pedagogical necessity. The more comfortable and familiar teachers are with processes and activities that work to create a democratic self in their own lives, the more qualified they will be to help students acquire and enhance their citizenship skills.

Build a Better Relationship with the Community

Involving young people in meetings and forums is only one step toward building a better relationship among schools, student and the community. Often teachers and school leaders do not know where or how to begin to translate their desire to help students into specific activities that nourish important skills, attitudes and values. A few suggestions follow:

Exposure. The first level of program initiative is exposure. Schools can arrange for students at all grade levels to enter the community through various activities. Farmer-philosopher-English professor Wendell Berry suggests four questions that can frame what he calls "Learning Days":

- How does a community *amuse* itself? What kinds of theatre, dance, music, visual art, book groups, bridge clubs, bowling leagues, folk art, recreation, sports and festivals does a community use to please and divert itself throughout the year?
- How does a community *console* itself? How does it grieve and deal with loss, death, hard times, disappointments and conflict? How does it bring healing when people sustain injury or are hurting?
- How does a community *educate* itself? Not just in its schools but in its workplaces, churches, businesses and celebrations? How does a community use acts of amusement and consolation to learn? How does it use individuals with inventive ways of learning and teaching?
- How does a community *sustain* itself? What do businesses, government, the nonprofit sector and community-based organizations do to further community aims, perpetuate community values and identity, and pass down the narratives of its past? What rivalries keep a community going? Where do families get the money they need to purchase their houses, cars, clothing, food and other items? What trade-offs are community members willing to sustain, e.g., industrial pollution vs. employment opportunities?

In pursuit of answers to these and other questions, students and teachers also should ask the following questions:

- What are the sources of beauty and danger in our community?
- What do children do after school is out? With what consequences?
- Where are the signs of hope and despair in the community?
- How does change occur in the community?
- What are the dynamics of power? Do some people or groups seem to dominate, or is there a spirit of shared leadership among a wide range of people?

If elementary, middle and high schools were to arrange for a year-long exposure process and engage students in this kind of inquiry with community cooperation, what might happen? One possible, even likely, result is that seeds would be planted that the wider community might harvest in the form of unsuspected pride in and commitment to its young people. The community may well develop a new sense of collective respect, as well as some of the knowledge, values and skills that go with creating a democratic self.

Skill Building. Exposure opens the door to skill development. But for that door to swing wide, a supporting infrastructure is needed to link schools and community organizations. ("Infrastructure" here means positions and organizations that broker the connections – both formal and informal – among schools, homes, workplaces and community settings, and community service.) Once students are exposed to persons in need or in harm's way, they are primed to discover the underlying community conditions that cry out for citizenship action; the next steps are to determine the changes needed, the skills required to create them and the steps needed to change them.

Responsibility. The processes of building skills are mere calisthenics unless they are applied in students' lives. For example, in many communities, students work part time for retail businesses after school, evenings and on weekends. Creating a reflective seminar on the issues of the workplace as they relate to active citizenship – for school credit – could create something of interest for these young people.

Part-time internships and research assistantships for public officials and public bodies, such as town council members, school boards, city councils or local housing authorities, could create real enthusiasm. Churches could sponsor organized teams of young people actively engaged in a variety of service activities that also have deep learning components to them.

Environmental concerns offer perhaps the most promising arena for student citizens to take responsibility. According to the Harris polling organization, almost seven of 10 young people in grades 4-12 are interested in learning more about environmental problems and what they can do about them. Given this relatively untapped interest, every school in the United States could become a primary monitoring site for air, water and soil pollution or a data source on effective or ineffective practices. The ties to science and social studies curricula are evident.

If schools were to provide these kinds of opportunities within the framework of citizenship education, they could create an interest with potential to stimulate the larger community and engage a far wider range of participation in working on these and other issues (e.g., transportation, housing, poverty, hunger, homelessness, etc.). More learning would occur in community contexts. The roster of who is educating America's children would grow to include more businesspeople, local officials, health-care workers and professionals of every stripe.

None of this has to be created from whole cloth. In virtually every state, these kinds of initiatives already are being undertaken; they need only be encouraged and expanded.

Invest in Service-Learning

As previously noted, the National Study Group believes service-learning is a significant pedagogy for helping students develop into good citizens because it provides both a context and a method for practicing the requisite civic skills. Service-learning can be an extremely powerful means for young people to experience what it means to be a public individual. Service-learning projects place young people in the public arena to address real issues, wrestle with real policy questions, make real decisions that have impact and deal with real consequences.

Thus, young people working on a park beautification project are not merely a collection of individuals developing an ethic of service. They also are individuals who are improving a public resource, who weigh the value of their labor against other claims on their time and energy, and who make a collective (i.e., *public*) statement about what they value as individuals. This is exactly what their parents do when they vote, volunteer at a soup kitchen, serve on a citizen task force or attend a town meeting.

But service-learning is not all method and process; it is directly tied to curricular content that lies at the core of learning – mastering content is essential to becoming a democratic self. No person can be civically literate if he or she is ignorant about the issues of the day, lacks a sense of history, is unaware of the vagaries of human motivation, is uncomfortable in the face of scientific ideas, or lacks knowledge of the history and nature of democracy as it unfolds at local, state and national levels of government.

Other important elements of classroom pedagogy as it occurs in service-learning are the group problem-solving and communication skills students acquire. As students engage in research and work with community members, they learn how to translate the facts they encounter into problem statements that can be worked on. They improve their ability to listen and to express their own views because they experience directly the practical necessity of doing so. A student cannot write a press release about a high school peer-conflict resolution program without a solid grounding in English grammar, for example. Students cannot put on a media program at a local senior facility without mastering the technology required.

SCHOOL ACTIVITIES TIED TO CIVIC DEVELOPMENT

- At Turner Middle School in West Philadelphia, students are working with University of Pennsylvania undergraduates to collect and study the effect of environmental lead in paint and soil.
- Central Park East Secondary School in East Harlem is providing opportunities for students to develop critical-thinking and problem-solving skills by having students do a variety of research projects to present and defend before their fellow students and teachers. When the students fan out into the community and engage in service projects prompted by their research efforts, teachers are given release time for program planning.
- Escuela Fratney in Milwaukee offers theme-based curriculum as part of service-learning in the community. Projects to date have included recycling, raising money for homeless children in El Salvador and testifying at a public hearing in favor of creating a nature preserve adjacent to the Milwaukee River.

Service-learning, because it is tied to real problems, provides a challenging context in which the outcomes of critical inquiry and decisionmaking can make a real difference. This process not only teaches students, but also empowers them by showing them their learning matters when they put it to work.

Integrate Service-Learning into the School

During the Regular School Day. The current design of the school day makes it difficult (though not impossible) to involve groups of students in off-campus service during school hours. Even within the current time and class structures, however, it is possible to involve students in projects that can serve the community. For example, students can learn computer skills as they correspond with seniors at a community computer center or senior home, who themselves may be new to the computer. Shop students can fabricate items of use for nonprofit organizations, such as picnic tables for the physically challenged or new signage for local parks. Science students can work on environmental issues in biology and chemistry classes, conducting research on a variety of local problems to share with appropriate organizations.

After-School Programs. After-school programs are becoming a more prevalent education strategy in school districts across America; they provide excellent opportunities for service experiences. Regrettably, however, many teachers and school officials lack the imagination to seize the potential latent in the after-school hours beyond a focus on homework. Stressing homework fails to recognize that students who are not succeeding in the regular school-day program may need an alternative approach to learning, not more of the same.

Service-learning during the after-school hours also can be an excellent alternative for combining the learning goals of homework clubs but achieving them in the service context. For example, students can produce newsletters for community-based organizations, operate a small business such as making crafts and selling them during the holidays, or organize a clothing or food drive. The opportunities, again, are limited only by the imagination.

Moving to a Block Schedule. Some form of block scheduling can make service-learning easier to implement during the regular school day. Instead of breaking up the school day into often too-short instructional periods, block scheduling aggregates time so students can work for a longer time on learning units and engage more readily in experiential learning. With an increased number of hours per learning session, students can be moved physically to community sites where they can engage in short-term service.

Illustrations of how the democratic self can be built through service-learning thus manifest themselves in a variety of ways. Some service-learning efforts require much preparation and may require that existing policies be realigned. Others may require only small rearrangements of existing practices. Regardless of the adjustments needed, there are myriad ways of making learning environments more democratic and of teaching democratic concepts and processes to young people experientially (see sidebar).

"Family Meeting." One of the most comprehensive examples of a local school devoting itself to creation of the democratic self among its students can be found in the Harmony School in Bloomington, Indiana. The program is called "Family Meeting," a gathering that takes place in each K-12 program. At Family Meeting, students are regularly given "air time" to share their views on all aspects of their learning environment. The content of the meetings varies, depending on the students' ages, but usually includes such topics as class assignments and trips; personal topics such as how students are treating one another; or even global issues such as how to offer help to Harmony's sister city in Nicaragua, which was devastated by a hurricane. Starting in 5th- and 6th-grade classes, students are asked to chair the meetings, which not only gives them practice in a crucial adult skill but also validates their "family" contribution.

THE DEMOCRATIC SELF TAKES TO THE ROAD

A much more complex and serious way that students are involved in democratic decisionmaking is the end-of-school trips taken at Indiana's Harmony School. Students in younger grades may spend one or two nights away at a campsite; by the time they are in high school, they spend nine to 11 days traveling and camping at destinations several days drive away.

As the trips' complexity increases, so does the intensity of student involvement. By the time students are in high school, they are responsible for researching and proposing destinations for the trip on which the entire high school community goes. They plan the itinerary, food (all food is student-prepared for the trip), necessary gear, fundraising and budget. Choices and plans made by the students affect every member of the school community, including teachers.

Family Meetings are used to make most decisions that affect the high school. Decisions are arrived at through discussions aimed at consensus, committees that make recommendations and voting. A simple majority decides most votes, but a three-quarters majority is required for policy changes.

Another way students practice democratic skills and values at Harmony is by having a choice in their schooling. Choices might involve what classes they will take for a semester or for a month-long mini-course. Teachers might give an assignment in which students can pursue what they want to study or how they might want to exhibit what they have learned. Family Meeting has proved a workable structure for giving students a voice, the power to make changes and tools for creating a democratic self.

THE POLICY CONTEXT

The parents, educators and community leaders who have struggled in recent years to get at the causes and remedies for "civic and civil decline" are soon to be heartened by a new book: *Becoming Good American Schools: The Struggle for Civic Virtue in Education Reform*. In it, Jeannie Oakes, professor and associate dean of the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California-Los Angeles, and her colleagues reinforce the equation posited by University of Georgia education professor Carl Glickman that "education is democracy and democracy is education." The problem, Oakes says, is that too many schools are caught up in the "reform mill."

As public policy in general has leaned toward deregulation, leaner bureaucracies, union bashing, and the privatization of social services and education, and as a market mentality has been used to dictate and articulate accountability policies, important considerations have been left out of the reform discussion, Oakes and her colleagues say – things such as the social and civic aims of education, a concern for social justice, caring, inclusiveness and participation. The authors argue that individual well-being has been emphasized over community interests and that it is time to turn attention to providing richer democratic (i.e., civic) education for both young and old.

To give education – and, hence, students – a richer civic experience means challenging current policy assumptions. Oakes and the others call on persons who care about education to oppose what they term the "punitive" nature of student assessment and the use of "banked knowledge" as the primary driver of those assessments. They argue that popular views about achievement and motivation, change models, and teaching and learning per se must all be put to the test.

One place to start, they assert, is by launching a new national conversation about what education is for and what a democratic future is all about. Some suggestions for steps along a new path are offered below; they make extensive use of service-learning and the creation of the democratic self as reform tools.

Policy Examination and Expansion

The recovery of a shared civic mission as the ground for service-learning requires a multi-pronged approach that includes an examination and expansion of current education policy and whether it supports or hinders service-learning. Given the existence of significant service-learning efforts within the public schools, it is important that policy encourage, support and reward its use; simply focusing on practice limits its capacity.

> Policies need to reflect the deepening understanding of how experiential learning helps young people acquire civic virtues and contributes to the education of the whole child. Many advocates of service-learning are intent on showing that experiential learning is the best pedagogical tool available. While this may be true for some children, it is not true for all because children's learning styles are so diverse.

Experiential learning, properly used in a service context, can be a highly effective pedagogy for teaching students how to function effectively in a democracy – including coping with and solving everyday problems. In addition, service-learning may be appropriate for teaching some academic content, but not all of what children need to learn. These factors must be brought to and acknowledged in the policy arena. For example, having students use math concepts in the context of service may not be the best way to learn math. But students can learn about practical applications of mathematics as they come to a better understanding of their civic role. Appropriate policy is needed to recognize such differences.

Potential Detours. Creating or redesigning policies regarding the use of service-learning faces two distinct challenges: (1) the preoccupation of education reform with achieving academic competence and (2) the continued reluctance of service-learning advocates to confront directly the opponents of any education approach that takes seriously the transmission of values. Fortunately, a focus on the value of the democratic self, both for education and society, can help restore a sense of civic mission to the schools and a sense of balance in the face of both these concerns.

It is clear that such deeply entrenched problems as race, poverty, drugs and school violence will not yield to a focus on academic learning outcomes alone. This means that the policy case for service-learning must be made not only on the grounds of its pedagogical effectiveness vis à vis academic standards, but also on the basis of the larger purposes that sustain the nation's communities.

A critical place to focus on policy that supports and encourages service-learning is in teacher education. Unless they attend to the democratic purposes of schools and the kinds of structural changes needed to move toward a more civic purpose for education, prospective teachers will continue to emerge from teacher education programs lacking the knowledge and the vision of a richer, more hopeful democracy. Teacher education needs a powerful new image of learning sparked by a series of national dialogues and debates – one that asks the kinds of questions framed by people like Oakes and her colleagues:

- Do we care about social and economic justice?
- How do we create opportunities for adults and young people to participate in democratic life together?
- How do we plant a sense of caring about communities into 21st-century teaching and learning?

The Education Commission of the States, working in isolation, cannot deliver such changes. Rather, coalitions are needed to bring individuals and organizations together around a common effort, striking the cadences of civic virtues in a way that invites others to join.

THE CHALLENGE

As Benjamin Franklin emerged from the final session of the Constitutional Convention, a woman reportedly asked him what kind of government had been decided upon. His reply was, "A republic, Madam, if you can keep it." Franklin was right. If Americans want to keep the republic, they have to be active citizens, willing to participate in the democratic process, willing to help solve problems in their communities, the nation and the world. And, they have to educate their children to do likewise.

But at the beginning of this new millennium, too few citizens – and even fewer youth – seem to hold an *active* commitment to the civic responsibilities required to maintain the democratic republic. Statistics defining the participation of Americans, particularly younger ones, in civic processes are not encouraging. Fewer than half of U.S. citizens voted in the last presidential election, with voter participation hitting the lowest level since 1924, according to the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate. More than three out of four Americans (76%) said they do not have "enough accurate information" to participate at the voting booth, prompting the League of Women Voters to conclude that "the health of our democracy is in jeopardy." Voters in the 18-30-year-old age range constitute about one-fifth of the electorate, yet the percentage of university freshmen that consider political awareness "very important" or "essential" dropped from 58% in 1966 to 29% in 1996; citizen participation in community meetings dropped from 22% to 13% (Putnam, 1995). In the same period, trust in government dropped from 76% to 25%, and the annual number of federal indictments of elected officials increased 291%.

A similar disconnect shows up in the report of the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). In the first assessment in 10 years of 4th, 8th and 12th graders' achievement in civics education, 30-35% of all students across the three grades performed *below* the "Basic" level. This means they did not exhibit an acceptable level of even "partial mastery of [the] prerequisite knowledge and skills" considered fundamental to "Proficient" performance (the next highest level). About 25% of students scored at the "Proficient" level in their knowledge of how democracy works. About two-thirds were performing at the "Basic" level (see sidebar for other highlights).

Minority students did even worse. At each grade level, higher percentages of white students scored at or above the "Proficient" level than African American, Hispanic or American Indian students. Thus, among minorities, who often have to deal civically and politically with ethnic issues, it appears that impoverished civics instruction may contribute to how ill-informed – and disaffected – minority youth are on issues directly affecting them.

Over time, the percentage of students reporting they discussed their school studies with anyone at home declined from grades 4-12. That is, the older the student, the less likely he or she was to be engaging in civic topics and ideas outside school.

These results are discouraging, as are those from the 1997 NAEP history assessment, which found that between 36-57% of students tested in history fell into the "*Below* Basic" category (emphasis added).

Civic Education. The role of civic education amid this depressing litany of poor performance is well-expressed in the *National Standards for Civics and Government* (1995), issued by the Center for Civic Education. Those standards state the following:

"The goal of education in civics and government is informed, responsible participation in political life by competent citizens committed to the fundamental values and principles of American constitutional democracy."

It is axiomatic that responsible political participation requires not merely instruction in the facts of "how a bill becomes a law," etc., but also in participation skills and democratic values. But even a cursory examination of K-12 curriculum materials in a typical public school social studies

NAEP CIVICS ASSESSMENT HIGHLIGHTS

- In all three grades (4, 8 and 12), civics achievement was higher among non-public school students than among public school students.
- At the 4th-grade level, while 74% of students knew that the laws of the United States are supposed to apply equally to everyone, only 15% were able to name two services paid for with federal tax dollars.
- Only 6% of 8th-grade students were able to describe two ways a country benefits from having a constitution.
- Only 9% of students could list two ways a democratic society benefits from the active participation of its citizens.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (1999). *Civics Report Card for the Nation*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

course shows a preoccupation with factual knowledge at the expense of developing participation skills and democratic values.

In too many cases, students are learning neither the values that can undergird their participation in civic life nor the analytic, communication and relational skills they need to make that participation effective and personally meaningful. As noted by Donald G. Haught, secretary-treasurer of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges:

"However powerful the standards plus accountability approach may appear to be, its very simplicity masks a danger which should not be ignored. It may be that boiling schooling down to bits of essential knowledge will distract both educators and the public from schools' other, equally essential chore: the transmission of democratic values and public purpose."

Certainly there are innovative teachers who fill this lacuna with meaningful instruction in civic values and participation skills, and who provide students with ample opportunity for practice and application. But the majority relies on textbooks that ignore that essential balance. Todd Clark, director of the Constitutional Rights Foundation, concludes that "the traditional curriculum provides no useful strategy for connecting general information and ideas to the examination of power and politics at the local level. Without such a bridge between the academic and the practical, students cannot understand the importance of civic issues to their lives as citizens" (1999). Should one be surprised, then, that young adults fail to see their place in the democratic system of government?

Civic Values, Civic Skills. The conclusion from all this is inescapable. Students cannot become participating citizens when they finish school (much less when they are still students) if they are not taught the skills they need to assume their rightful roles as the bearers of the nation's civic and democratic traditions. They need to learn and practice, under guidance, the arts of public discourse, conflict resolution, cooperation, cultural competence, leadership, civic problem solving and community service – *while they are young*.

Absent a commitment to transmitting the great democratic values to the next generation, the nation runs the risk that these young people will become an atrophied limb on the body politic. It is therefore essential, in the words of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), that those in charge of the education of America's children launch a "...renewed effort by social studies educators, schools and communities to teach character and civic virtue" (1996). A useful place to begin instructing students is suggested by R. Freeman Butts, William F. Russell Professor Emeritus in the Foundations of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University. In his *The Morality of Democratic Citizenship: Goals for Civic Education in the Republic's Third Century* (1988), he describes two categories of civic values based on the nation's motto, "*E pluribus unum*" ("From the many, one"). Among the "*pluribus* values," he includes freedom, diversity, privacy, due process and human rights; the "*unum* values" include justice, equality, authority, democratic participation and an obligation to support the "public good." The key to American democracy and civic virtue, Butts maintained, is striking the right balance between these two categories.

This conceptual framework finds a pragmatic and concrete context, once more, in service-learning. Programs such as "Active Citizenship Today" (sponsored by the Constitutional Rights Foundation,) "Project Citizen" (Center for Civic Education) and "The American Promise" (Farmers Insurance and NCSS) all connect the learning of civic knowledge and civic values with the practice of civic participation skills in community problem-solving and service activities.

If we are serious about the kind of nation and society we want our children to sustain, we must equip them to the task. Service-learning, the National Study Group believes, is the most promising place to begin that effort. By placing it at the center of strategizing about how to accomplish the goals Americans have always espoused for their schools, we can fulfill our duty as stewards of our children's learning and powerfully enable in them the creation of their democratic selves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To begin to remedy the potentially dangerous lack of citizenship knowledge, skills and attitude among young people, the National Study Group recommends action at the local, state and national levels. It also recommends steps ECS should take and encourages schools, districts, states, students, parents and communities to find their own responses and avenues of action, to explore other ways to become involved in this critical call for civic action.

The recommendations that follow are ones policymakers, classroom teachers, school administrators, communities, parents and students can begin to act on today. They entail little mystery, are inexpensive to implement (most, in fact, are free) and highly leveraged (for example, federal Title I funding can support service-learning). For the most part, since they reflect long-established beliefs, they scarcely require a change of heart. What they do require is a generous dose of political will and the leadership to create changes.

For Schools and School Districts

- Reassess the moral and democratic environment, with a view to learning what principles are taught, whether deliberately, by inadvertent example or as an embedded feature of the "hidden curriculum" of school structures, procedures, decisionmaking, attitudes and behaviors.
- Align policies and their implementation with a coherent moral structure valued by all personnel.
- As a part of instructional programs in social studies, civics and government, include stories and lessons that teach the traditions of how ordinary citizens and social movements have created real and lasting social change. Examples might include Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, the Vietnam era anti-war movement, Marion Wright Edelman and Morris Dees.
- With the assistance of national, local and regional teacher-training institutions, design and offer a full complement of professional development courses for teachers and administrators that integrate all aspects of civic knowledge, skills and attitudes throughout the curriculum. These offerings should be predicated on a service-learning model and other experiential activities, using the local community as a classroom.
- To the extent practicable, include PTA and PTO members as students in these courses along with teachers, with a view to strengthening parents' status as their children's role models for civic involvement and commitment.
- Begin immediately to implement programs of community outreach aimed at including community groups (e.g., governmental bodies, regulatory bodies, community service organizations and nonprofit organizations of every stripe) in the creation of democratic learning environments in all schools. These bodies and groups should give careful consideration to restructuring measures that make it possible for students to participate in their decisionmaking activities and governance.
- Create on local school boards at least two student positions with full expectation of student expression and participation in all decisionmaking activities and governance.
- Reconstitute PTAs and PTOs as Parent, Teacher, Student Associations/Organizations, according student members the same rights and responsibilities as adult members.

- Institute in schools and communities regular visits and presentations by locally elected and appointed officials and state legislators, with a view to providing a venue for discussing local political issues, especially those in the sphere of education.
- Work with local governments, regulatory bodies and authorities, and local officials to create internship positions in their offices designed as service-learning opportunities for youth.
- Provide students opportunities to work individually or in groups on service-learning activities in their schools or community.

At the State Level

- *Governors:* Take steps to provide forums for educating state legislatures, state school boards, state-level chapters of professional education associations, state teacher organizations, teachers unions, all principals and all district superintendents to communicate the importance of including civic education as part of the core K-12 curriculum. These efforts should focus on experiential learning, especially service-learning, as the gateway to civic education.
- *State school boards:* Create at least two student positions with full expectation of student expression and participation in all decisionmaking activities and governance.
- *Legislators:*
  - — As part of constituent-service efforts, regularly visit local schools to explain the job of a legislator
  - — Establish student internship positions in local offices
  - — Fund K-12 civic education efforts that incorporate multi-dimensional curricula aimed at fostering civic responsibility, the development of civic skills and civic education. This funding should especially include monies for professional development of teachers and community outreach.

At the National Level

- *U.S. Department of Education:* Through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, promote and support civic education programs that engage students in service-learning activities designed to foster the development of civic dispositions, knowledge and participatory skills of responsible citizenship, both for the participating students and the people served by those students. These service-learning activities should include opportunities for students to work individually or in groups in their schools or greater community to do the following:
  - — Identify, access, analyze, organize and apply information about issues of public importance, recognizing and explaining multiple points of view
  - — Evaluate, take and defend positions on community issues and needs

— Assess community needs and develop a plan of action to address these needs, using a variety of resources, including the Internet

— Develop an understanding of the connections between themselves and the larger community

— Inform and advocate before community, state and national policymakers on issues of public importance through letters, "op ed" pieces, speaking before public bodies and the like.

- *National Goals Panel, Corporation for National Service and U.S. Department of Education*: Assess the country's progress in the citizenship part of Goal 3 of Goals 2000: Student Achievement and Citizenship.

- *National Alliance for Civic Education*: Establish a "national dialogue" among the organizations at work on these issues, focused on how to engage young people in political action as part of their lives. Participants in the dialogue should include such national and civic groups as the National Alliance for Civic Education, Constitutional Rights Foundation and the Center for Civic Education.

- *Corporation for National Service*: Rewrite guidelines to require that all Learn and Serve America programs for students K-12 and higher focus on fostering civic responsibility, the development of civic dispositions, and the knowledge and participatory skills of responsible citizenship, both for the participating students and the people served by those students.

For ECS

To begin to carry out the above recommendations, the National Study Group recommends that ECS, through the Compact for Learning and Citizenship, take the lead in helping state and local policymakers – governors, legislators, chiefs and superintendents – do the following:

- Assess the state of citizenship education in their schools

- Develop policies and plans for improving creation of the democratic self among their students

- Become part of the national campaign to implement the National Study Group's recommendations.

The study group and ECS believe furthering these efforts will require a three- to five-year period. Activities suggested for ECS include the following:

- *Dissemination and Communications*

  Disseminate the *Every Student A Citizen: Creating the Democratic Self* report to national, state and local audiences, such as policymakers, education officials, discipline-based organizations and parent groups, through a variety of means, including Web sites, meetings and work with the media. ECS believes it is critical for this report to be broadly disseminated, followed by targeted communication with various audiences.

- *Networking*

  Develop partnerships with various national organizations and coalitions to promote implementation of the recommendations among their members.

- *Demonstration Project*

  Design a strategy that engages a targeted number of states, districts and schools in infusing and scaling-up education for citizenship. The focus would be on such elements as professional development, policy support, partnerships, sharing of promising practices and creating products that identify challenges and successful strategies.

- *Research and Policy Review*

  Conduct an environmental scan of the existing research on civic and citizenship education to determine who's doing what on this issue and how it is being framed and covered by the media and other organizations. Based on the findings, determine the viability of generating extended visibility for the initiative and report.

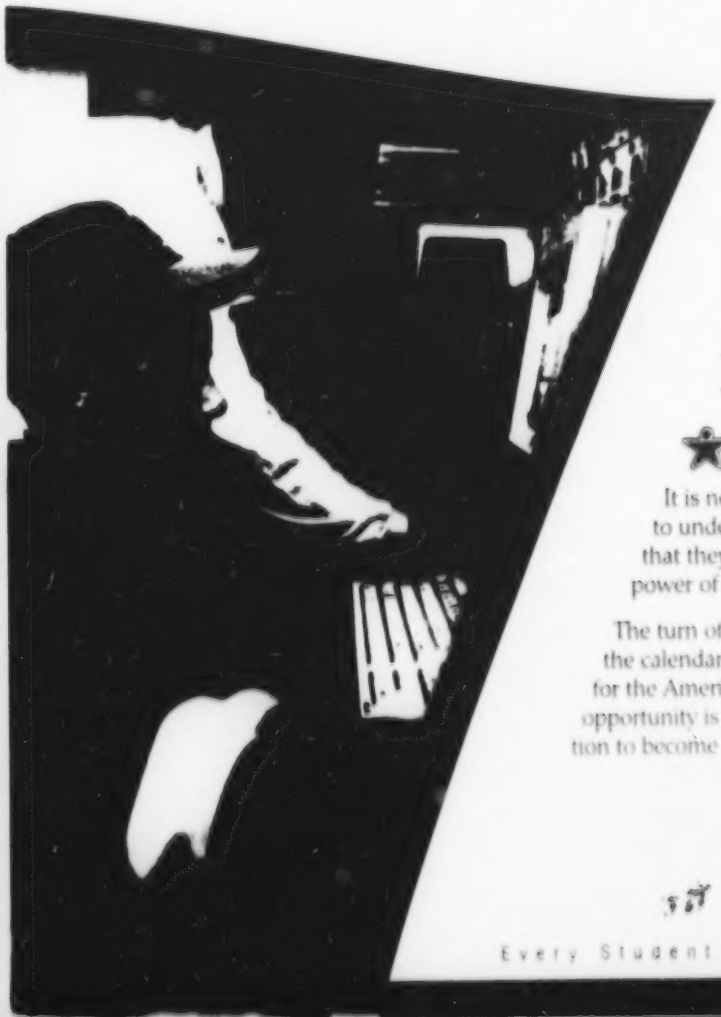
A FINAL WORD

To summarize, the National Study Group expresses its belief in and commitment to three fundamental approaches to revitalizing citizenship education in schools: (1) creating democratic schools, (2) a curriculum that makes extensive use of service-learning and (3) active youth involvement.

When John Dewey espoused the notion that students should be given opportunities to practice the skills of democracy as a part of their schooling, he did not have in mind that students should run schools or that the staff could not make decisions without students' consent. He did mean, however, that students should be invited to participate in solving the real problems that arise in the school as a community, through dialogue, democratic decisionmaking and working to implement solutions.

How can students participate in shaping the experience of their school as a moral community? Respect for young people as independent human beings demands, first of all, that they be guided in a continuing dialogue with one another, school staff and their parents about *real* problems. In schools, the "real problems" often include littering, graffiti, disrespect, fighting, weekend drinking, substance abuse and violence. Students can be, should be – and, indeed, in some cases are – guided through democratic problem-solving processes and granted real authority to create and implement solutions to such problems in partnership with staff, parents and community.

Such problems, creatively approached in classrooms, also can become bridges that link disparate parts of the curriculum and provide occasions for all students to reflect on their civic responsibility to their daily community. In this way, students become living exemplars of what Sheldon Berman, superintendent of schools in Hudson, Massachusetts, refers to as "social responsibility." He comments that:



> *"Social responsibility emerges from the unity of one's sense of self and one's morality, the sense of connectedness to others and the sense of meaning that one derives from contributing to something greater than oneself. . . . Social responsibility is about caring. It is about the way we live with each other and treat each other. . . . In essence, it's about seeing a larger sense of self that is a meaningful and contributing member of society."*

The Core of Learning

It is not uncommon for students who serve their school or community to undergo a personal transformation when they come to the realization that they really belong and that *they can make a difference*. They learn the power of *E pluribus unum*.

The turn of the century and the millennium marked more than an event on the calendar. Many Americans sense that the nation is also at a turning point for the American experiment in democracy. Many citizens feel that a historic opportunity is within their grasp – to educate and empower the rising generation to become active and responsible citizens. America needs to ignite the imag-

ination of youth, reinvigorate the vision of the Founding Fathers and adapt it to the incredible social, technological, environmental and economic challenges and opportunities of today. The result will be engaging youth in the empowering process of creating a democratic self – in their communities, schools and lives. To that end, may teachers, parents, policymakers and school administrators – all Americans – together with students – resolve to place civic responsibility and service itself at the core of learning.

If we do nothing to improve how students are educated for citizenship, we give up the ability to set the terms for the future of our children and, in the end, the nation. The opposite of doing nothing about citizenship education is not stasis. It is to concede that the disconnect Americans now experience as a problem will inevitably be a permanent condition. The decision to default is one the nation cannot afford.

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APPENDIX

Programs That Effectively Use Service-Learning To Foster Civic Outcomes for Youth

Active Citizenship, Empowering America's Youth
This curriculum, for grades 5-12, integrates American history, civic values, civic participation skills and service-learning. Students learn about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and practice critical-thinking and participation skills by solving real problems in their school or community. Students learn the civic values and vision of the Founding Fathers and are challenged to make a meaningful contribution to democracy.

Active Citizenship, Empowering America's Youth
John Minkler
Center for Multicultural Cooperation
30450 Yosemite Springs Parkway
Coarsegold, CA 93614
Tel: 800-432-3618
www.activecitizenship.org

Active Citizenship Today (ACT)
Active Citizenship Today involves middle and high school students in applying the knowledge and skills learned in the classroom to solving problems in their communities. Adaptable to several different subjects, ACT is built around a problem-solving curriculum and encourages students to become participants in local civic issues. It is sponsored jointly by the Constitutional Rights Foundation and the Close Up Foundation.

Constitutional Rights Foundation
601 S. Kingsley Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90005
Tel: 213-487-5590
www.crf-usa.org/
www.crf-usa.org/act/act.html

Close Up Foundation
44 Canal Center Plaza
Alexandria, VA 22314
Tel: 800-CLOSEUP
www.closeup.org

The American Promise
A video series to help K-12 teachers bring democracy to life in their classrooms, *The American Promise* focuses on nine challenges that face any democracy, historically and today: Freedom, responsibility, participation, hard choices, information, opportunity, leverage, deliberation and common ground. Teachers' guides are available for putting the program to work in government, history, social studies, civics, economics, law, geography and service-learning courses.

Keeping the American Promise
P.O. box 514989
Los Angeles, CA 90051-4989
Fax: 213-964-8031
www.americanpromise.com/

Community Works
Based on the curriculum from Street Law's "Teen, Crime and the Community" Program, Community Works combines education and action to reduce teen victimization and involve youth in their communities. Used both inside and outside schools, this program develops leadership and communications skills. It culminates in a service-learning project that youth plan, design and implement.

Street Law, Inc.
1600 K. Street, NW
Suite 602
Washington, DC 20006
Tel: 202-293-0088
www.streetlaw.org

Earth Force CAPS (Community Action and Problem Solving)
This program works with schools in developing the academic and personal skills necessary for students to engage effectively in environmental problem solving in their communities. Young people work with adult leaders to identify local environmental concerns, and develop and implement a plan, which results in long-term improvement of the local environment. Improvement in the status of endangered species, informing the community about local health hazards and creating a wildlife habitat are among the many projects developed by CAPS participants.

Earth Force
1908 Mount Vernon Avenue, 2nd Fl.
Alexandria, VA 22301
Tel: 703-299-9400
www.earthforce.org

Project Citizen
Project Citizen is a civic participation program for middle school students that promotes competent and responsible participation in state and local government. It actively engages students in learning how to monitor and influence public policy and encourages civic participation among students, their parents and community members. Students work together in class to identify and study a public policy issue and then develop an action plan for implementing their policy. The final product is a portfolio displaying each group's work. In the culminating activity, the class presents its portfolio in a simulated legislative hearing, demonstrating how public policy is formulated. Student portfolios are evaluated.

Center for Civic Education
5146 Douglas Fir Road
Calabasas, CA 91302-9321
Tel: 800-350-4223
www.civiced.org

YMCA Earth Service Corps
Sponsored by the YMCA, this program encourages teens to "make a difference" in their communities. The program can be used both inside and outside of school. Working with community leaders, Earth Service Corps teaches young people the leadership and education skills necessary to plan and implement environmental projects that will improve their cities and towns. It involves more than 20,000 young people in 30 states.

YMCA Earth Service Corps
909 Fourth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104
Tel: 800-733-YESC
www.yesc.org

Youth for Justice (YFJ)
Youth for Justice is sponsored and directed by a consortium of national law-related educated groups: American Bar Association, Center for Civic Education, Constitutional Rights Foundation, Phi Alpha Delta Law Fraternity and Street Law. The program consists of statewide Youth Summits, involving high school students who research and discuss problems facing today's teenagers. Students then address policymakers through hearings and lobbying efforts. Several laws, including the establishment of teen courts, "zero-tolerance" and "open-container" laws have been enacted through the efforts of YFJ students.

American Bar Association
Division for Public Education
541 North Fairbanks Court
Chicago, IL 60611-3314
Tel: 312-988-5735
www.abanet.org/publiced/lre/yfj.html

Center for Civic Education
5146 Douglas Fir Road
Calabasas, CA 91302-11467
Tel: 800-350-4223
www.civiced.org

Constitutional Rights Foundation
601 S. Kingsley Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90005
Tel: 213-487-5590
www.crf-usa.org

The Generator Project
The National Youth Leadership Council, based in St. Paul, Minnesota, has developed "The Generator School Project," which encourages schools across the country to integrate service-learning into their curricula. Funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the project contains a list of 40 schools that have developed effective service-learning programs, including educating parents about the importance of reading to their children, creating public murals and landscaping a cemetery.

National Youth Leadership Council
1910 West Country Road B
St. Paul, MN 55113
Tel: 651-631-3672
www.nylc.org

Learn and Serve America
A division of the Corporation for National Service, Learn and Serve America and its "Leader Schools" program showcase middle schools and their "exemplary integration of student service into the curriculum and life of the school." For a complete listing of schools, contact:

Corporation for National Service
1201 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20525
Tel: 202-606-5000
www.cns.gov/learn/index.html

National Evaluation of Learn and Serve America
This 1999 report was developed by the Brandeis University Center for Human Resources and funded through the Corporation for National Service. The report evaluates the effects of service-learning programs across the country from 1993-97. Numerous examples of effective service learning program K-12 are listed.

Center for Human Resources
Brandeis University
Waltham, MA 02454
Tel: 781-736-2000
http://graduateschool.heller.brandeis.edu/chr/projects.htm#1

Corporation for National Service
1201 New York Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20525
Tel: 202-606-5000
www.cns.gov

National Service-Learning Clearinghouse
The Learn and Serve America National Service-Learning Clearinghouse is a comprehensive information system that focuses on all dimensions of service-learning, covering kindergarten through higher education school-based, as well as community-based, initiatives. The center is located at the University of Minnesota Department of Work, Community and Family Education, with collaboration from a consortium of 13 other institutions and organizations.

National Service-Learning Clearinghouse
University of Minnesota
Department of Work, Community and Family Education
1954 Buford Avenue, Room R-460
St. Paul, MN 55108
Tel: 800-808-SERVe (7378)
Fax: 612-625-6277
www.nicsl.coled.umn.edu/

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GETTING INVOLVED

Creating the democratic self is everyone's responsibility. The recommendations and national campaign described in this report identify specific action steps and responsibilities for all stakeholders to provide high-quality opportunities for America's youth to reach their greatest civic potential.

Many of the recommendations can be implemented by maximizing current partnerships and/or creating new collaborations. To get involved, check out the *Every Student A Citizen* initiative of the Compact for Learning and Citizenship section of the Education Commission of the States Web site (www.ecs.org/clc), or contact Terry Pickeral, project director, tpickeral@ecs.org.

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EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES

ECS

Every Student A Citizen: Creating the Democratic Self

Executive Summary

Campaign for Action

Compact for Learning and Citizenship
National Study Group on Citizenship in K-12 Schools

Student Citizens

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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EVERY STUDENT A CITIZEN: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite 50 years of scientific and technological achievement, unabated wealth creation and gains in health, transportation, medicine, manufacturing and a host of other fields, a sense of "dis-ease" gnaws at the collective American soul. Something feels wrong.

A big part of that "something" is a deepening sense of civic disconnection. Many Americans are disengaging from fragmenting social structures that no longer address their real needs. They are repelled by cultural changes such as high divorce rates and explicit sex and gratuitous violence in films. Many feel overlooked and betrayed by governments that seem beyond the reach of ordinary citizens or captive to special interests.

At the same time, more and more Americans seem to be disengaging from even the most fundamental acts of citizenship, such as voting and keeping informed about public issues. These disconnects emerge in sharper, more painful relief among the nation's youth.

Young people today get mixed moral messages at every turn. Adults encourage them to delay personal satisfactions to pursue higher education, a better job or similar lofty aims, yet surround them with the temptations of a consumerist culture that entices them to "Just Do It!" and a media culture that promises instant gratification of frivolous desires – at no personal cost.

These mixed messages are eroding the soul of young people – and of American society. Young Americans and the schools they attend need an invitation to something better and higher. The purpose of school, after all, is not merely to provide the next generation with the tools they need to make a living, but also to help them discover the personal and collective means – the perspectives, strength of character and values – they will need to sustain our civilization. Young people need help in moving toward a higher regard for democratic institutions and a greater willingness to be involved in them.

To examine these issues and make recommendations on how to end this trend of declining citizenship, the Education Commission of the States' (ECS) service-learning initiative, the Compact for Learning and Citizenship, created the National Study Group on Citizenship in K-12 Schools. The 21-member group — including K-12 teachers and students, university faculty and students, representatives from national education associations, administrators of national civic education organizations, and education and service-learning consultants — focused on the goal of ECS' Every Student A Citizen initiative – *to engage all students in active citizenship and help education leaders meet schools' academic and civic missions.*

Implementation efforts for the *Every Student A Citizen* initiative focus on activities and services designed to achieve three goals:

- Articulate the pressing need to revitalize education's civic and citizenship mission
- Advance service-learning as a strategy that can challenge and guide students to meet their civic responsibilities
- Engage every student in activities that make a difference in their schools and communities.

National Study Group members were convened for a short time to focus on the specific issue of youth disengagement from civic literacy and experience. The group researched the evidence and existing efforts, surveyed potential solutions, answered questions and advanced the conversation, advocating for service-learning and contributing to this final report and call for action.

A secondary group of governors, lieutenant governors, writers, educators, foundation executives, chief state school officers, students and civic experts served as national responders. They read, reacted and responded to an initial draft of this report, the recommendations and call to action, and the components necessary to launch a national campaign to encourage and help young people be good citizens.

This report summarizes the deliberations of these people and their recommendations for moving forward in better educating students for citizenship.

Creating a Democratic Self

Education for citizenship is not the same as civic education, which is concerned with academic skills such as how a bill becomes a law, although it includes acquiring civic skills and knowledge. Rather, education for citizenship is a moral enterprise. It is concerned with organizing schools in ways that give students opportunities to learn about citizenship and its importance, and acquire the needed skills and knowledge associated with it. It is based on the belief that it is just as important for young people to acquire a "democratic self" or a "civic self-understanding" as it is to gain specific civic skills.

The National Study Group sees two components in building this democratic self. First is the ability to recognize and acknowledge one's self-worth and self-interest in collective decisions, that is, to identify one's personal stake in public deliberation and decisionmaking. Students who lack a realistic self-understanding of their education situation cannot, for example, see the connection between a school board decision, what will happen to them in class and what they can do about that decision.

Second, it is important that young people see themselves as members of a public — a community. Without such an understanding, young citizens have no sense of what the common good is or their part in achieving it. They have to learn to recognize that a community is no mere aggregate of individuals, but rather a group of people who belong to one another because they share both a heritage and a hope.

Beyond these elements, being an effective citizen also means acquiring an education in civic skills that nourishes the ability and willingness to make judgments about what is best for the whole. These judgments are rooted in such principles as fairness, beneficence, self-denial, liberty, loyalty, honesty and a commitment to the greater good. A strong capacity for critical judgment and reflection, the ability to conduct critical inquiries about facts and decisions, and the ability to participate in public deliberations impartially and objectively are all significant and necessary civic skills.

In addition, the process of creating new citizens involves the ability to be inclusive, respecting the heritages, diversity and interests of others; to be comprehensive, seeking to understand others' views; to be deliberative, willing to engage in mutual give and take without rancor; and to be cooperative, continuing to participate when things do not go their way.

Acquiring such civic skills is not a matter of teaching techniques or routines, or of creating an education "program" that will deliver civic knowledge and skills as one would teach a chemistry student the procedures for conducting an experiment safely. Participating responsibly and effectively in community life is more like a "craft," an art form that uses people's needs, rights and responsibilities as basic materials to create a common world. In such an understanding, the citizen (regardless of age) becomes a co-creator of his or her own environment. The institutions

and processes among which he or she lives can be re-envisioned as realities to be fashioned, rather than as givens to be accommodated. This way of looking at the results of education for citizenship leads to ownership – a stake. It is learned through practice, not out of a book.

Investing in Students Through Service-Learning

The National Study Group is convinced that a curriculum that uses service-learning[1] as an integrating force, combining needed service to the community with strong academic content and structured exercises of reflection in the classroom, can provide this education for citizenship that youth need to become civically engaged in their communities. Schools are charged with serving the universal function of teaching all young people the knowledge, skills and attitudes that nourish all forms of civic engagement.

Too many schools, however, are caught up in the "reform mill," busily working to improve but forgetting that education is not about academics alone. As public policy in general has moved toward deregulation, leaner bureaucracies, and the privatization of social services and education, important considerations have been left out of the education reform discussion: the social and civic aims of education, and a concern for social justice, caring, inclusiveness and participation. Education for citizenship – through service-learning — is a serious approach to bridging this gap.

Observation and evaluation of schools that are civically engaged and work to instill principles of citizenship in their students show that the most successful are guided by what might be called "principles of best practice." A democratically engaged school:

- Is guided by an understanding of how democracy and community engagement relate to its mission.
- Involves its stakeholders (teachers, administrators, staff, parents, students and community members) in a continuous and authentic way.
- Holds learning at its center, including building strong partnerships with communities to develop democratic values, knowledge, skills, efficacy and commitment among its students.
- Has a pervasive commitment to democracy.
- Develops an infrastructure that supports the complex nature of democratic and community engagement.
- Is a "full-use" institution, serving a variety of community needs.
- Is flexible, responsive and sensitive to its external constituencies and promotes a culture of democracy.

[1] *Service-learning, as defined by the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, helps students or participants learn and develop by participating in thoughtfully organized service that is conducted in and meets the needs of a community, is coordinated with an elementary or secondary school, institution of higher education or community service program, and with the community, helps to foster civic responsibility, is integrated into and enhances students' academic curriculum or the education components of the community service program in which participants are enrolled, provides structured time for students or other participants to reflect on the service experience.*

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THE RECOMMENDATIONS

To begin to remedy the potentially dangerous lack of citizenship knowledge, skills and attitude among young people, the National Study Group recommends action at the local, state and national levels. It also recommends steps ECS should take and encourages schools, districts, states, students, parents and communities to find their own responses and avenues of action, to explore other ways to become involved in this critical call for civic action.

The recommendations that follow are ones policymakers, classroom teachers, school administrators, communities, parents and students can begin to act on today. They entail little mystery, are inexpensive to implement (most, in fact, are free) and highly leveraged. For the most part, since they reflect long-established beliefs, they scarcely require a change of heart. What they do require is a generous dose of political will and the leadership to create changes.

For Schools and School Districts, the National Study Group Recommends:

- Reassess the moral and democratic environment to learn what principles are taught deliberately, by inadvertent example or in the "hidden curriculum" of structures, procedures, decisionmaking, attitudes and behaviors.
- Align policies and their implementation with a coherent moral structure valued by all personnel.
- Implement programs of community outreach to involve community groups in creating democratic learning environments in all schools, giving careful consideration to restructuring measures that make it possible for students to participate in decisionmaking activities and governance.
- Institute regular school visits and presentations by locally elected and appointed officials and state legislators to provide a venue for discussing local political issues, especially those related to education.
- With the assistance of national, local and regional teacher-training institutions, design and offer a full complement of professional development courses that integrate all aspects of civic knowledge, skills and attitudes throughout the curriculum. These offerings should be predicated on a service-learning model and other experiential activities, using the local community as a classroom.
- Include, to the extent practicable, PTA and PTO members as students in these courses along with teachers to strengthen parents' status as their children's role models for civic involvement and commitment.
- Create on local school boards at least two student positions with full expression and participation in all decisionmaking activities and governance.
- Include in social studies, civics and government courses, stories and lessons that teach the traditions of how ordinary citizens have created real and lasting social change.
- Reconstitute PTAs and PTOs as Parent, Teacher, Student Associations/Organizations, according student members the same rights and responsibilities as adult members.
- Provide students opportunities to work individually or in groups on service-learning activities in their schools or community.
- Work with governments, regulatory bodies and authorities, and officials to create internship positions designed as service-learning opportunities for youth.

For States, the National Study Group Recommends:

- *Governors:* Provide forums to educate state legislators, members of state school boards, state chapters of professional education associations, state teacher organizations and unions, school principals and district superintendents about the importance of including civic education in the core K-12 curriculum. Focus these efforts on experiential learning, especially service-learning, as the gateway to education for citizenship.
- *State school boards:* Create at least two student positions with full student expression and participation in all decisionmaking activities and governance.
- *Legislators:*
  - Regularly visit local schools to explain roles and responsibilities.
  - Establish student internship positions in legislative offices.
  - Fund K-12 efforts that incorporate multi-dimensional curricula aimed at fostering civic responsibility, the development of civic skills and civic education, including funds for professional development of teachers and community outreach.

For the National Level, the National Study Group Recommends:

- *U.S. Department of Education:* Through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, promote and support civic education programs that engage students in service-learning activities.
- *National Goals Panel, Corporation for National Service and U.S. Department of Education:* Work together to assess the country's progress in the citizenship part of Goal 3 of Goals 2000: Student Achievement and Citizenship.
- *National Alliance for Civic Education:* Establish a national dialogue among organizations working on these issues, focused on how to engage young people in political action.
- *Corporation for National Service:* Rewrite guidelines to require that all Learn and Serve America programs for students K-12 and higher focus on fostering civic responsibility, the development of civic dispositions, and the knowledge and participatory skills of responsible citizenship.

For ECS

To begin to carry out the above recommendations, the National Study Group recommends that ECS, through the Compact for Learning and Citizenship, take the lead in helping state and local policymakers – governors, legislators, chiefs and superintendents – do the following:

- Assess the state of citizenship education in their schools
- Develop policies and plans for improving creation of the democratic self among their students
- Become part of the national campaign to implement the National Study Group's recommendations.

The study group and ECS believe furthering these efforts will require a three- to five-year period. Activities suggested for ECS include the following:

- *Dissemination and Communications*

  Disseminate the *Every Student A Citizen* report to national, state and local audiences, such as policymakers, education officials, discipline-based organizations and parent groups, through a variety of means, including Web sites, meetings and work with the media. ECS believes it is critical for this report to be broadly disseminated, followed by targeted communication with various audiences.

- *Networking*

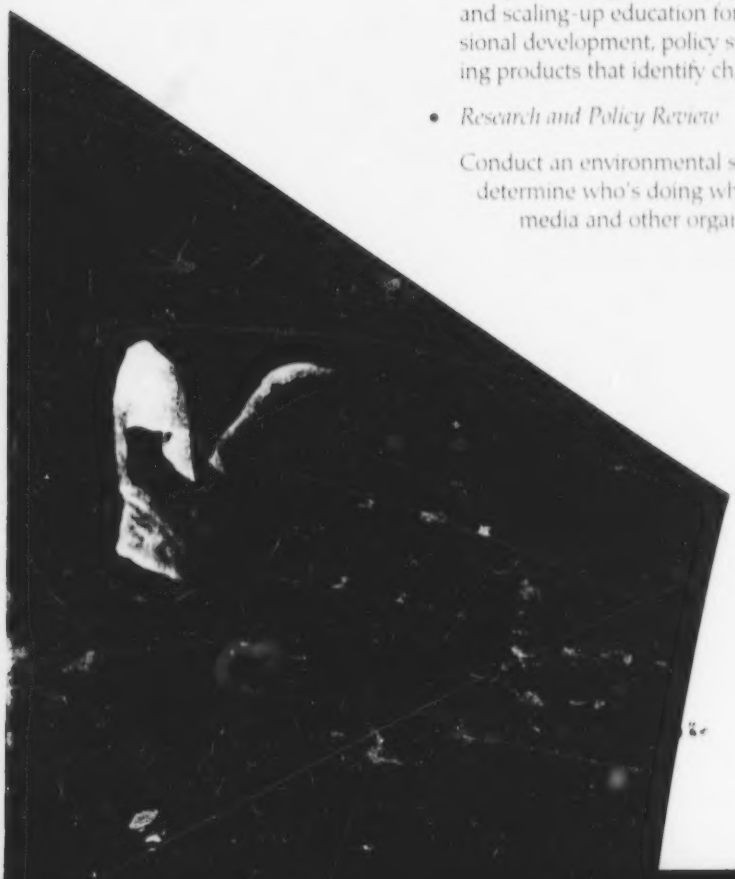
  Develop partnerships with various national organizations and coalitions to promote implementation of the recommendations among their members.

- *Demonstration Project*

  Design a strategy that engages a targeted number of states, districts and schools in infusing and scaling-up education for citizenship. The focus would be on such elements as professional development, policy support, partnerships, sharing of promising practices, and creating products that identify challenges and successful strategies.

- *Research and Policy Review*

  Conduct an environmental scan of the existing research on civic and citizenship education to determine who's doing what on this issue and how it is being framed and covered by the media and other organizations.



CONCLUSION

The turn of the century and the millennium marked more than an event on the calendar. Many Americans sense the nation is at a turning point for the experiment in democracy. Many citizens feel a historic opportunity is within their grasp – to educate and empower the rising generation to become active and responsible citizens. Schools, policymakers, citizens – everyone – need to work together to ignite the imagination of America's youth, reinvigorate the vision of the Founding Fathers, and adapt it to the incredible social, technological, environmental and economic challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Indeed, this *can* be done if youth are helped to create a democratic self – in their communities, in their schools and in their own lives. To that end, teachers, parents, policymakers and school administrators, together with students, must resolve to place civic responsibility and service itself at the core of learning.

This pursuit of the democratic self through education for citizenship is well-informed by the observation of writer Neil Postman in The *End of Education*. He wrote:

"...public education does not serve a public. It creates a public. And in creating the right kind of public, the schools contribute to strengthening the spiritual basis of the American creed....The question is not 'Does or doesn't public school create a public?' The question is, 'What kind of public does it create?'"

If we do nothing to improve how students are educated for citizenship, we give up the ability to set the terms for the future of our children and, in the end, the nation. The opposite of doing nothing about citizenship education is not stasis. It is to concede that the disconnect Americans now experience as a problem inevitably will be a permanent condition. The decision to default is one the nation cannot afford.

GETTING INVOLVED

Creating the democratic self is everyone's responsibility. The recommendations and national campaign described in this report identify specific action steps and responsibilities for all stakeholders to provide high-quality opportunities for America's youth to reach their greatest civic potential.

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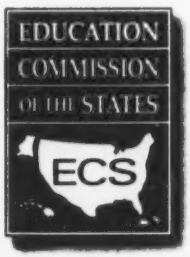

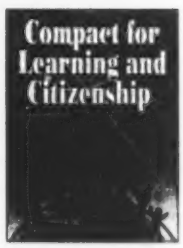

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